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Joy and Peace



Charisma and Character - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delivers a talk on the Christian concept of joy and peace as fruits of the Spirit, as listed in Galatians 5. He notes that joy is often associated with levitation in occult practices, but in Scripture, it is something that exists deeper within the soul than simply outward happiness. Peace, he explains, is a supernatural God-originated thing that exists regardless of external circumstances. Both joy and peace are seen as normative states for Christians, associated with the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to continue our look at the fruit of the Spirit, which are listed in Galatians chapter 5. And just as I did not, the position I took when we were studying the gifts of the Spirit was that we do not find a comprehensive list anywhere in Paul's writings or elsewhere in Scripture that would include all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We have a list of five of them here, and nine of them there, and seven of them here, and some of the lists overlap each other. And none of the lists, nor probably all the lists combined, give us a total listing of all the things that we could call, that could legitimately be called, gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, when we talk about the fruit of the Spirit, we don't find all of those listed in any one place either. The things that Paul lists here in Galatians are simply a sampling of what kinds of things would be regarded as fruits of the Holy Spirit, I believe. And I believe that as we looked last week at some of the other lists that included some of these things, we found that there were other things named as well.

But this is the only place where we find the expression, the fruit of the Spirit. And lest we be occupied in this series almost infinitely going through all the possible things that could be called fruit of the Spirit, we're going to restrict the range of our consideration to those that are listed in Galatians 5. Again, that is in verses 22 and 23, where Paul says, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, and against such there is no law. Now, these things that Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit are simply the product in the life and the character of

the believer, of the working of the Holy Spirit, when the believer is walking in the Spirit.

I don't believe that we can ever come to the place where these things will simply be constant, uninterrupted, unbroken phenomena in our lives, unless we come to the point where we're walking in the Spirit all the time. Now, I'm not saying that's an impossibility. In fact, I hope that it may be a possibility.

I don't claim to walk in the Holy Spirit all the time myself. I wish I did. And I don't know that I've met anyone that I'm convinced walks in the Spirit at all moments either.

Because when you do walk in the Spirit, you do not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Paul said that in the same chapter in Galatians 5.16. This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. So, while you are walking in the Spirit, you are not fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

Paul lists them. We won't read them. He says the works of the flesh are manifested.

Now, which are these? And these are in verses 19 through 21. It's a much longer list than the list of the fruit of the Spirit that he gives. But, presumably, since the works of the flesh are what we don't do when we're walking in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is what we do do, or what does happen in our lives when we are walking in the Spirit.

Christian character, therefore, is not some kind of a static thing that is arrived at once, and then you just kind of camp there and live there the rest of your life. But it's a continual progress toward perfection. And we talked about love last time.

We didn't look at all the scriptures on that subject, but it does talk in 1 John about being perfected in love. And he who fears is not being perfected in love. Being perfected in love is something that is a goal.

But I don't know anybody who is as perfect in love as Jesus was. And that holds true with the other items in this list as well. I think that Christian character is simply the desire and the attempt to consistently walk in the Spirit and to manifest these character traits, which were, all of them, character traits of Christ.

And I want to take two of them tonight, partly because I don't have nine weeks to take a week for each of them, and partly because these two belong together. And many of the things that I would have to say about one of them, I'd have to say about both of them. In fact, some of the passages we'll look at that are relevant to the study of these subjects include both of them in the passages.

And I think they're very closely related subjects. And since I've given you a handout, you know what they are. And even if I hadn't given you a handout, if you looked at Galatians 5.22, you could guess what they would be.

And they are the second and the third listed fruit of the Spirit, joy and peace. Now, I've given you some lexical definitions on the handout of joy and peace. The Greek word for joy is kara, and its meaning is to rejoice, or simply the noun joy.

It is a rejoicing. Now, rejoicing is a word that most of us know only from the Bible. I don't know that you really find the word rejoicing or rejoice used a great deal in modern English, but we know it from the scriptures, both from the King James and even modern translations use it.

Another word like it is exalt, not exalt. Many times people get that mixed up. Exalt means to lift up, like we exalt God in our praises.

But to exalt is to experience great happiness, to experience great joy. And rejoice is a verb form of the word joy, to have joy. To take joy in something is to rejoice.

And this is the meaning of the Greek word. Obviously, the English word joy is quite adequate. We don't need to find some kind of synonyms for it.

But there are other Greek words that are synonymous with this word kara. Agaleasis is one of them, which means exaltation or exuberant joy. And also there's another Greek word, euphrosyne, which means good cheer, mirth and gladness of heart.

Now, none of these words are equivalent to what we could call levity. The word levity is not that well known among modern people, but it's a modern word. But a lot of people here, I think if I use the word levity, would not be quite sure what it means.

But levity, well, you know the word levitate, probably. We usually associate levitation with the occult, with certain occultic practices that cause things to rise from the ground, to act as if it's light, as if it has no weight. Well, levity is to have sort of a, to treat things lightly, as if they have no weight.

And a constant joking, a constant, actually, after I've said joking, there's not any other word I need to use. I think joking is good, kidding around, prank, pranks and making, you know, puns about everything, making fun of things all the time. Just taking a light attitude toward life in general is not what joy is.

That would be levity. Now, I don't believe the word levity is found in the scripture, but it may be, but I don't think it is. But the opposite is.

The opposite of levity is gravity. And we know the word gravity because it's a physical law that everything is pulled down. It treats everything as if it has weight, because everything does have weight.

And gravity is also a character trait. And it is mentioned a number of times in scripture. One of the places I'd like to call your attention to is in Titus, chapter two.

Gravity and sobriety are similar concepts, and Christians are exhorted to have these traits. He says in verse two, Titus 2, 2, Teach the older men to be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love and in patience. The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, etc.

Going down to verse six, Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded. Sobriety, sober-minded, grave. I think the King James uses the word grave in those verses.

We have just sober-minded here in the New King James. But, what's that? Is the word grave found there anywhere? The older men. The older men should be grave, it says.

Yeah, okay. Words are almost interchangeable. In fact, the New King James basically uses them interchangeably.

Where the King James says the older men should be grave, King James says sober. But, the words are obviously very similar. To treat things with weight, to treat life in general as having weight.

Jesus was, well, we don't ever read of Jesus laughing. I believe he probably did laugh on occasion. But, I think it's amazing that we don't read of him laughing.

Though we do read of him more than once weeping. And we do read that he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Now, what does that have to do, or what does that have in common with joy? Which is, as we said, good cheer, mirth, gladness of heart, exultation, exuberant joy, rejoicing.

Obviously, if we are told to be grave and sober, which is the opposite of having levity, then levity and joy are not the same thing. And, joy is not in contrast with sobriety or gravity. A person can have joy and be a serious person.

A person can be a joyful person and treat life as a weighty thing, as something that has weight. Jesus was burdened with the cares of the world. And so was Paul.

He said that daily the care of the churches weighed upon his heart. Yet, he rejoiced always. And therefore, we need to look into this subject of joy, because we usually think of joy principally as a habit.

Perhaps you can tell when people have joy, you think by their smile or by their quickness to laugh and enjoy a good time. And that may or may not exist along with joy. That is an emotion that we typically call happiness or joy.

But it may not be necessarily always present when joy is present. Joy is, according to scripture, something that exists deeper in the character, deeper in the soul, than simply outward happiness. Now, before we go and look at specific scriptures on joy, I want to introduce what peace means also.

Peace, the Greek word is eirene, and it means peace or rest, in contrast with strife. It denotes the absence of strife, the state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being. Now, in preparing this study, I looked up every verse in the Bible that used this word.

And I had to sort through those verses which were relevant and which were not relevant to the subject of peace as a fruit of the Spirit. Because peace is used a number of ways. The Bible speaks about having peace with each other.

In fact, that is perhaps one of the most common ways we read of peace in the New Testament. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. And making peace usually has to do with relationships between parties.

Paul says in Ephesians 4.3 that we need to endeavor to maintain or to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He talks about how Christ has taken the formerly hostile elements of Jew and Gentile and broken down the middle wall of partition that used to exist between them and made in himself one new man, so making peace. Now, this peace that we read of so frequently this way in the New Testament is not the same thing as the fruit of the Spirit, although, of course, it may be a result of that fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit, which is peace, is an inward peace. Like joy is an inward thing, peace is an inward thing. It is an inward state of being at rest, undisturbed, untroubled, not characterized by internal strife.

Now, of course, the opposite of this kind of peace would be anxiety, worry, fear, nervousness. Some of those words may carry the idea. Panic and so forth.

Now, there's a lot of things that these have in common. But one of the things they have in common is they both seem to address very common ailments that people go to therapists for treatment of in our society. Among the most common ailments that people will visit a psychiatrist or psychologist about are depression and anxiety.

And depression is the opposite of this joy. Well, it may or may not be, depends what we mean by depression, but we'll talk about that. And anxiety is certainly the opposite of peace.

And if joy and peace are the fruit of walking in the Holy Spirit, then it would seem to follow that persons who are tormented by depression and anxiety could have relief from this and could overcome it if they would simply learn what it means to walk in the Spirit and do so. Now, I don't mean to make that sound easier than it is. Many of us from childhood have developed wrong patterns of thinking and reacting and feeling.

And we've indulged our feelings in areas where we should not. We've indulged our minds to think in patterns that we should not permit them to think in. And we've got these habits with us sometimes before we're converted.

And when we're converted, it's not real easy to overcome them. But it must be done. Not just because we need relief from depression and anxiety.

The Bible isn't all about giving us relief. That is, of course, how the Gospel is often advertised to the unbeliever. You know, come to Jesus and you'll have joy and you'll have peace and you won't be anxious anymore.

You won't have depression anymore. You won't be lonely anymore. God will take care of all your problems.

And that is, I think, capable of finding fulfillment in the Christian life. I believe that that is potentially true. But many of you have found, I'm sure, that becoming a Christian did not eliminate automatically all depression.

It did not eliminate automatically all anxiety or loneliness or some of these things. And it is, in one sense, fallacious to advertise to people, you know, with an altar call, you know, if you come to Jesus, you won't have these negative emotions anymore. But not only is it fallacious in that sense, in that it, in a sense, makes false promises.

It's fallacious in the very grounds of it. We don't offer Christ to people so that they can find relief from their problems. Persons need to come to Christ because they are in rebellion against God.

And God has to endure their rebellion every day so long as they don't repent. And if they repent, then God is the one who finds much deserved relief from the annoyance of rebellious people whom he gave them no right to rebel, and their rebellion is an offense to him every day. The gospel is for God's glory.

It's for God's pleasure. It's for God to receive what he deserves. Only secondarily do we receive something beneficial to us, but we do.

We do, and that's because we were made and designed to be in harmony with God. And when we're not in harmony with God, the machine doesn't work right. Things don't go right, psychologically and spiritually and physically even.

Things go wrong. When we're not living in harmony with God, it's just like using a, you know, whatever, a hair cutter to mow your lawn or something. They're not made for that.

To use the machine for something different than it was made for is going to be damaging to the machine. But the purpose of getting right with God is not so that we can be relieved from our problems. It is because God has a problem, and that's us.

And it's to relieve God of that problem. He's the one, and we deserve all the problems we have, but he doesn't deserve to have the problem that we give him. And so we call people to repentance because they owe it to God to get right with God.

He owes them nothing. But he is gracious enough to give them some very positive benefits from being in right relationship with him, including joy and peace. These are a product of walking in the Spirit, walking in proper relationship with God.

And the Holy Spirit produces these in the life. When this is the case, when a person is walking in the Spirit, I believe, first of all, that anxiety cannot dominate. I chose my words advisedly because I can't say that anxiety cannot come.

And I would not say that depression cannot come upon a Christian walking in the Spirit. I believe that Jesus himself experienced both anxiety and depression at times. Not clinical, as they would call it today, but I believe that he felt emotionally down on occasions.

And I believe that he also experienced something that looked like anxiety. Certainly in the garden when he sweated, as it were, great drops of blood, he was certainly under stress of some kind. But no one could say that those states of mind in any sense dominated his personality or were frequent or constant in his life, as they are in the lives of many people who profess to be Christians.

And I believe that walking in the Spirit does not prevent us from experiencing tumultuous circumstances, some of which may be external and some may even come upon us emotionally. I believe some of the trials that God intends for us to overcome are emotional in nature. When we think of trials, we might think of persecution, we might think of physical sickness, we might think of losing your job, experiencing financial reversals.

We might say, well, those are the trials that Christ wants me to go through in order to grow up into him and all things and so forth. And I agree with that. But the thing is, we need to realize that emotional afflictions can also come upon us in the will of God as part of the testing and trying for us to overcome.

Some of these afflictions we might label as anxiety and depression because we are momentarily, and I say momentarily because it doesn't have to last more than a moment. Sometimes it does if we don't react properly early on. But momentarily we can certainly be overwhelmed with the sadness of a certain thing.

Paul himself had tears at times when he was writing his letters because of the depressing nature of what was going on in the church and people preaching the gospel with wrong motives and so forth. I mean, it made him weak. I believe he still experienced the fruit of the spirit of joy at that time, but it wasn't expressed in his emotions.

Likewise, I believe that almost every Christian, and even before that, the prophets before, experienced moments of panic. I say moments of panic because a Christian who experiences the surge of panic or anxiety can respond to that in the spirit and can overcome it and walk in peace. But I'm not trying to present to you a model of the

Christian life, which once you are in it, you will never experience surges of panic or anxiety or sadness or even deep sadness.

Those things belong in the Christian life. Those are some of the realities of life that Christ expects for us to experience and to overcome through the spirit. And the way we do so is to call upon these resources, which the Holy Spirit grants us, the fruit of joy and peace in the life, and to respond.

And I want to be as practical as I can. If you've glanced down at the handout, again, you might know some of the direction we're going with this, but I don't want you to look too far ahead because I want to take the points in their proper order. Now, I said that there's a number of things that these two items, joy and peace, have in common.

And the first I mentioned is that they both seem to address some of the basic problems for which people see therapists today. Depression and anxiety. But there's more to that.

Biblically, both of them are first and foremost an inward state. They are mostly inward, and it's not always possible to measure them by outward emotional stimuli or emotional reactions. Though like any inward virtue, your behavior that is dictated by these things will be positive and right behavior.

But you can't always tell if someone is experiencing joy in the Holy Spirit just because they are experiencing tremendous sobriety and gravity or even sadness at the moment. There is actually such a thing as happiness in the midst of sadness. I know that sounds like a contradiction in terms, but that's only because we think of joy in non-biblical ways.

In John 15, verse 11, Jesus said, These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. Now notice, my joy may remain in you. It's an inward thing, and it remains there.

Your emotions may have their ups and downs, but the joy is to remain there. Remain in you, and the joy can be full. The joy comes from, well, that gets to our next point.

Let me, before I get into that, let me show you a few more scriptures on this inward aspect of it. Look at Colossians. Here we'll be looking at peace, because the scripture we just looked at talked about joy.

But we want to look at this scripture that talks about peace as an inward phenomenon. In Colossians 3, verse 15, Paul said, Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body, and be thankful. Now, let the peace of God rule in your hearts.

Now, if I were giving a Bible study on the subject of divine guidance, I would point out to you that the word rule there is a peculiar word. It actually means to play the umpire. And if you look that up in a lexicon, you'll find that this is the case.

That the word rule that is used in this particular case means to play the umpire. So the peace of God plays the umpire. And to apply this to the issue of spiritual guidance, we might say, Well, you know, when you're thinking of, when there are several options before you, and you have to make a choice, and you don't know what the will of God is, let the peace of God make the call, like an umpire.

I feel peace about this, and I don't feel peace about that one or that one. The peace of God seems to not agree with this decision, but the peace of God seems to agree with this decision. This is very probably where the expression comes from that people sometimes use of getting a check in the spirit.

Although that expression is not found in the scriptures, getting a check in the spirit. It means that the peace of God that's normally there is checked. I don't feel peace about that particular thing.

It's what some people today refer to as getting a check in the spirit. But that's not our subject tonight. What I want to point out is that the peace of God rules in your heart.

Of course, whatever is ruling in your heart is going to come out through your behavior too. But for the peace of God to rule in your heart doesn't mean that it never has any opponents. It doesn't mean that no anxiety or fear or worry will ever present itself as a resistor to the peace of God.

But the peace of God must necessarily rule in the heart. This is an inward reality. I mentioned in the notes, however, that I've given you that although joy and peace are both an inward reality, they are nonetheless infectious.

They affect other people. If you are a person of joy, a joyful person, unless you're insensitive about it when you're around people who are going through great trials, it is likely that you'll be an uplifting person. Other people will find joy in your presence because of your joy in the Lord.

It can infect others. Likewise, peace is that way. If you're at peace when everyone else is in turmoil, your peace can infect others.

We know in the book of Acts there's a story of Paul and his companions were on a ship in a storm. The ship was sinking and they'd thrown the tackle overboard and they all thought the ship was going to sink. But Paul had a dream where an angel came and stood by him and told him everyone was going to make it and so forth.

Paul was calm and he addressed the whole crew and the passengers on the ship. He calmed them down and he got them to a place where they hadn't eaten for days because they were so nervous. He got them to sit down and eat and be more at peace.

Paul's own composure tended to restore composure among those that he was with. The

scripture I've given you in the notes, Matthew 10, 13, is a scripture Jesus gave to the twelve when he sent them out. He said in verse 12 and 13, When you go into a household, greet it, and if the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it.

But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. Now, that's always been kind of an interesting verse. If you enter a house, if it's a worthy house, let your peace come on that house.

If it's not a worthy house, let your peace come back to you. Offer peace, you greet them, peace be with you, is the typical greeting. But the peace doesn't stay with them.

If they're not worthy to receive it, it'll come back to you. You can take it with you when you leave, but they won't have it. Now that certainly treats peace as if it's an actual commodity, as if it's something tangible.

And I don't believe it is. I believe it's more metaphorical. But certainly, at the very least, the verse suggests that you, if you are in possession of the peace of God, can impart peace to your environment if they are receptive to it.

So that joy and peace are internal first of all, but become externalized by the effect that a person who is joyful or a person who is peaceful has on those in his environment. Now, joy and peace are both, in the Old and New Testaments, said to be the normative state of Christians. Now I said a Christian can experience surges of anxiety or of great sadness or whatever, but those are the exception.

And they should not be allowed to prevail as the norm in the life. Now, if anxiety and depression are the norm in your life, then there's something that you are neglecting. It is not the normal thing, regardless of your circumstances, it's not the normal thing to be in anxiety and sadness and depression, because the Bible indicates that people who are saved, it is normative for them to have joy and peace.

And the point I was going to make earlier about joy not being necessarily exhibited in emotional outbreaks, it was this point that we come to now. And that is that joy in the Bible accompanies salvation. It is the normal accompaniment of salvation.

If a person is saved and not joyful, they must not know they are saved, or they must not know what they were saved from. I've given you a number of scriptures, but before we look at any of those that I gave in the notes, I'd like to give you one that's not in the notes. And this is Psalm 32, verses 1 and 2. Psalm 32, verses 1 and 2. It's not in the notes, but it belongs there.

David wrote, Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity. The word blessed means happy.

How happy is the man that the Lord does not impute iniquity to? How happy is the man whose sins are forgiven? David knew this because he wrote this apparently shortly after he had repented of his sin with Bathsheba. And therefore, he knew the release from guilt. He knew the liberation from the penalty that he deserved.

And he bubbled forth with his joy and the blessedness of the experience of being forgiven. That is normative. In the Old Testament, Isaiah the prophet particularly said a great deal about salvation because Isaiah predicted the new covenant and the Messiah more than any other prophet did.

And there are many passages in Isaiah that speak of our salvation by way of, of course, prophetic anticipation. One of those places is Isaiah 55 and verse 12, which says, For you shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. Now, we know that whole verse because we've said it to music.

We haven't, but someone has. We know how it sounds to sing it. We know the whole verse, but that's far enough.

Speaking of persons who have been saved, people who are redeemed in covenant with God, they go out with joy and they're led forth with peace. Joy and peace are the subjects we're talking about, and both of them belong to the normative saved persons experience. In Isaiah chapter 12, joy is particularly associated with salvation.

In a poetic song, the whole chapter is a short song of salvation. And verse 3 says, Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Obviously, if you're drawing from the wells of salvation, you're drawing salvation out of those wells.

The water is the water of salvation itself. And you draw salvation with joy as you receive and drink of salvation. It is a joy engendering experience.

Joy is a product of being saved. Likewise, in Isaiah 35, another short chapter, the entirety of which is about the new covenant and the salvation in Christ. I realize that if you read the whole chapter, you might not be sure that I'm right about that.

And you don't have to trust me on that, but I'm not going to take the time to defend my position. I'm convinced that it is. Isaiah 35.10 says, And the ransomed, and that's what we are.

Jesus said that he came to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

This sorrow and sighing, I think in the context, refers to the sorrow and sighing that the remnant of Israel experienced under their persecutions and the problems that they had before the time Christ came. Under their oppressors like the Babylonians and the

Persians and the Greeks and the Antiochus Epiphanies and so forth. They sighed and they groaned under that until Jesus came and brought them redemption.

And they were ransomed. And so are we because we're part of them. So this also is talking about the joy associated with salvation.

Now peace is also in Isaiah associated with salvation. In Isaiah 32.17 it says, The work of righteousness. That is when God imputes you righteous.

What that works in you is peace. The work of righteousness will be peace and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. Now quietness and assurance are simply another way of saying peace.

This is Hebrew parallelism in the poetry here. So what righteousness works in you will be peace. The effect of righteousness in your life will be quietness and assurance.

That is peace forever. And there's a New Testament verse that says exactly that same thing. And that's Romans 5.1 which says, Therefore being justified, which means declared righteous, by faith we have peace with God.

The effect of righteousness is peace. The effect, the product of being saved is that we have peace with God. That's Romans 5.1. Many of you I'm sure already know that verse.

Therefore having been justified, that is to be made righteous, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. So it is associated with salvation. Both joy and peace are.

In Matthew 13, there's a couple of parables there which associate joy with salvation. Matthew 13, when Jesus tells the parable of the sower, you might recall that some of the seed fell on stony ground, had no root, grew up for a little while and then was wilted in the sun and died. And Jesus explains the meaning of that parable and that portion of it in Matthew 13, 20.

He says, But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. But he has no root, but endures only for a while. Now, this person received the word with joy.

Now, some might say, Well, this is just an external joy. This is not real salvation because the person doesn't endure. Well, if you're a Calvinist and if your theology tells you that those who are truly saved will endure, then obviously you can't allow that this person's really saved.

However, the word joy that's used here is the same Greek word, and by the way, there's other Greek words for joy, but this is the same Greek word that's said to be a fruit of the Spirit. It's the same Greek word that's generally associated with salvation. Now, that

doesn't prove that this person isn't experiencing a counterfeit of that joy, but I think it is a necessity of Calvinistic doctrine to try to say that this person wasn't really saved, and that's just because their doctrine doesn't allow that someone could be saved and then lose their salvation, as this person then would in the parable.

However, Jesus said they received the word. I'm not really sure how you could not get saved if you received the word, if you received the gospel. And they received it with joy, they just didn't have deep roots, and they didn't receive it forever.

As long as they received it, they had joy, but they did fall away when persecution and tribulation came because of the word. Later in the same chapter, there's another parable which very clearly associates joy with salvation. He says in Matthew 13, verse 44, Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and for the joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Now, to sell all that you have, to part with everything you have, is quite a sacrifice. And yet, this person does that joyfully because of the joy he finds in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is such a thing of value, that it's a matter of joy to him to part with everything in order to obtain it.

That is, of course, salvation. That is coming into the kingdom. That is coming to discipleship, making the necessary sacrifice to obtain the kingdom of God.

A person who really knows the Lord will gladly, cheerfully make those sacrifices because it's a joy to be in the kingdom. And that treasure is worth more than what had to be sacrificed to obtain it. Now, speaking further about joy and peace being normative in the Christian life, it's not only seen in these scriptures as an accompaniment of salvation.

There are other places that speak of joy as a product of the Holy Spirit, besides Galatians 5.22, which says the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. There are other places, too, that associate these things with the Holy Spirit's work in the life and with the kingdom of God itself. In Romans 14.17, Paul says, the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but it is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Now, not just righteousness and peace and joy. Do you know there are people who don't have the Holy Spirit who could have a specie of righteousness and a specie of peace and a specie of joy? Do you know there are people who aren't Christians who are tranquil? Not everybody who's not a Christian is in turmoil. I mean, there are people who are relatively happy, tranquil, undisturbed people, live a decent life externally.

This is not the kingdom of God, though. It's not just righteousness, peace and joy. It's righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

You see, anybody who doesn't have righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, the only kind of righteousness, peace and joy they can have is righteousness, peace and joy

in their circumstances. They can find joy in joyful circumstances. They can find peace in peaceable circumstances.

But, when it's in the Spirit rather than in circumstance, then it is something that is more constant, which is one of the things we'll bring up later on. But, it is through the Holy Spirit that the Christian in the kingdom of God experiences righteousness and peace and joy. It is a fruit of the Spirit.

In Romans 8, 6, Paul says, to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded, that is to have the mind of the Spirit, which requires that you have the Holy Spirit, is life and peace. Peace is a product of having a mind governed by the Holy Spirit. Peace is a fruit of the Spirit.

In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, in verse 6, Paul reminds the readers that they had become followers of us, he says, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy in the Holy Spirit, the joy of the Holy Spirit. Now, they had received the word in much affliction, but this didn't prevent them from having joy. There is great joy in their conversion, though they were born again into an environment of trouble and affliction.

But, their joy was in the Holy Spirit. It was the joy of the Holy Spirit. It is a spiritual phenomenon, and because it is spiritual, it is supernatural, which is a point we'll be bringing up a little later here.

It is a supernatural joy and peace. These are also both said in Scripture to be a result of faith. If you lack joy, if you lack peace, it does not necessarily mean that you lack the Spirit.

But, it may be that you lack faith. It is through faith that we access the benefits and the blessings of God, including those which are potential in the Holy Spirit residing in us. We have the Holy Spirit in us, but we don't always experience the fruit of the Spirit.

Faith is the means by which the Spirit's blessings are brought to us. We find in Romans 15, both joy and peace are said here to be a result of believing or of faith. Romans 15 and verse 13, Now may the God of hope fill you all with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, here it is again, the Holy Spirit. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that this happens to you. But, you are filled with joy and peace in believing.

That is by believing, by having faith. By trusting God, you experience joy. By trusting God, you experience peace.

When you fail to trust God, you will lack in these characteristics. They are a product of faith. In Isaiah 26 and verse 3, this verse I imagine is also a fairly familiar verse to many of you.

Isaiah 26, 3 says, You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. God keeps the believer who trusts in God in perfect peace. If your mind is stayed on God, He keeps you in perfect peace.

It is a fruit of the Spirit through faith, because He trusts in thee. So, again, faith is the necessary element to realize the fruit of the Spirit in this case. Now, both joy and peace also are associated with God's favor.

And the reason this is the normative state of Christians is because Christians are supposed to live in a way that God favors them. Now, we experience something called grace, which we define as unmerited favor. In Christ, God has favor toward us.

He gives us a treatment as if we were favorable to Him. But, in addition to the unmerited favor that we receive through faith, which makes us Christians, which makes us accepted in the Beloved, it remains true that there are some things we can do in our lives that please God and things we can do that don't please God. There are things that make God feel more favorable toward us.

Now, I don't want you to confuse this with being saved. I'm not saying certain things we do will make us more saved than we were otherwise. But, certainly, God favors certain behaviors and welcomes into His presence and into fellowship with Him certain persons who do certain things more than others.

For example, as a Christian, if you're sloppy and lukewarm in your devotion to God, you will not live with all the benefits of His favor in your life. You will not live in His presence in the same sense that the person who seeks God's face will. And the Bible makes this plain in many places.

Seeking the face of God is called for. And when you find the presence of God, when you seek God's face and come into His presence, what do you find there? Well, according to Psalm 16 and verse 11, David said, You will show me the path of life in your presence is fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Joy is normative for Christians because being in the presence of God is normative for Christians.

Now, when I say normative, I don't say it's automatic. A lot of things we would describe as normative are what the Christian can be like, potentially is. But that which is normative is not always realized because it's possible to live at a very subnormal level.

And I'm afraid most Christians do that a great deal of the time. They don't experience all that is their birthright in Christ because of slackness, because of indifference, because of apathy, because of spiritual bondage or whatever. But the norm for the Christian life is to be in the presence of God, doing all those things that please Him, and knowing that joy, that fullness of joy that is in His presence, in His right hand.

In Psalm 29, verse 11, it says, The Lord will give strength to His people. The Lord will

bless His people with peace. Peace is a blessing from God.

God blesses those that are pleasing to Him, those that receive His favor. Joy and peace are the fruit of God's favor upon a person's life. In Psalm 4, verses 6 through 8, we have both gladness or joy and peace, which are the product of having God's light of His countenance shine upon us, which is a Hebraism that refers to His favoring us, for the light of His countenance to shine upon you, is for Him to show favor to you.

But in Psalm 4, verses 6 through 8, it says, There are many who say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us. You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. I will both lie down in peace and sleep.

For You alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. Now, when the light of God's countenance is upon you, God puts gladness in your heart, and you can lie down in peace. Joy and peace are the fruit of living in God's favor.

Now, joy and peace are both supernatural. They have this in common with one another. And when the New Testament writers speak about joy and peace, they use superlatives.

That's what the word is. And they're kind of ultra-superlatives. Both peace and joy are spoken of in Scripture as something that really is indescribable and not comprehensible in human terms.

It's a supernatural, God-originated thing. In 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 8, 1 Peter 1.8, Peter says, Whom having not seen, you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

The joy with which we rejoice is inexpressible. Now, I don't know whether inexpressible means indescribable, like I can't explain it, I can't describe it. Or whether it means that this joy is actually so deep that it doesn't always find outward expression.

It's there. It's like a fire burning inside that warms you, even in very cold and hostile circumstances. But you're still warmed by the heat and the light and the flame of that joy, but it's not always expressed.

It's a joy inexpressible and full of glory. Or whether it simply means that this joy is something that just defies human speech to describe it, to communicate it by words. You simply have to experience it.

You can't explain it to somebody who doesn't have it, but anybody who has this joy, it doesn't need to have it explained to them. Likewise, in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 7, we read of the peace of God that surpasses all understanding. Philippians 4, 7 talks about God's peace.

Now, the joy is inexpressible and full of glory. The peace of God surpasses all understanding. It is a peace that you really can't rationally figure out why you would be at peace in certain circumstances when everyone else is going berserk because the circumstances are so bad.

And you feel like you ought to be ill at ease also, but you're not. God just gives you this spirit of peace, this spirit of tranquility at times that simply can't be explained. It surpasses understanding.

Why do I have this peace? Well, I can't explain it. Don't understand it. It's just, I trust God and the Spirit of God just bequeaths me this benefit of peace in my spirit.

In John 14, 27, Jesus said to his disciples, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you, not as the world gives do I give to you. I give you my peace. It's not like the world gives.

The world does give peace. Jesus acknowledges this. There are times when people's worldly circumstances are conducive to tranquility, to undisturbed peace.

Although some people, even when they're in tranquil circumstances, don't know peace inside. There are many people who are never tranquil and always anxious. But most people who are rational can experience a measure of peace when circumstances are peaceful.

The world gives peace to some at some times. But Jesus gives a peace that's not like that. It passes all understanding.

It's not like the world gives. It's his own peace. And therefore, it is his own character trait that is given to us as is true with all the fruit of the Spirit.

Now, because joy and peace are supernatural, because they are not as the world gives, because they go beyond the human fleshly, worldly counterparts to them, they are not subject to worldly circumstances. Peace and joy can remain constant, regardless of external circumstances. And when I say constant, I want to say, we might think of constant as, well, I'm going to just stick with the word constant.

You see, I believe there are emotional blips, you know, in that line there. You know, you're not just even and emotionless. The Christian life is not one of stoicism, where you don't register pain, you don't register joy.

I mean, you're just even all the time. That's not the normal Christian life. The normal Christian life is full of experience of the world, of reaction to stimuli, which legitimately inspire sadness, which legitimately arouse anxiety or fear.

Now, I say they legitimately arouse it, and I want to clarify something here. The emotions of happiness and the emotions of fear and anxiety are all in one sense positive. They

exist for a reason.

If you are walking down the street and you see half a block away a tiger that's escaped from the zoo is walking around loose, you experience a rush of anxiety and that motivates you to do something intelligent, like go indoors or climb a tree or do something, get out of there. You experience a sensation which is natural and legitimate. There's a real danger there, and the sudden apprehension of danger causes you to do something.

The same thing with joy. The fact that some things make us happy encourages us to do those things, especially if they're good things. If we experience joy in the Lord in something, it encourages and motivates us to continue doing those kinds of things.

But the same emotions of joy and anxiety can become very bad. They can become, I should say, sadness. Sadness can motivate you.

I'm sorry about that. Sadness and anxiety are the opposites of joy and peace, you'd think. But only when we're talking about the surface, the emotional level.

To have the emotion of sadness can motivate you to do something that you wouldn't otherwise do if you weren't sad. To have the emotion of fear can motivate you to do something that you should do, like get to a place of safety or something like that. Those are emotions that God gives us.

Even animals experience those emotions. The higher animals do. Everyone can see that animals experience some grief when a companion dies, especially some animals like dogs and things like that.

Animals experience fear. And these things are instinctive. These things are necessary.

These are visceral reactions to stimuli in their environment. And those are not bad in themselves, nor are they bad when they come upon you. There are times when they're entirely appropriate.

Now, of course, if you're anxious about the wrong things or sad about the wrong things, if you're carnally minded, you'll get sad when God may be rejoicing, and you'll be fearful when God may feel like you're in the best place possible. But if you're spiritually minded, you'll be sad when you hear that people are dying. You'll rejoice when a sinner repents, because all in heaven is rejoicing over that.

There are things in the emotional level that change, because circumstances legitimately call for emotional shifts. Paul says to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep. When you're with somebody who's weeping, you should be compassionate, you should be empathetic, you should experience, bear some of that burden with them.

But when you're with someone rejoicing, you shouldn't be a wet blanket. You should encourage their rejoicing if it's a legitimate and righteous thing. Emotional ups and downs are okay.

But that doesn't mean that when you have sadness, that you've lost this joy in the Holy Spirit, or that when you're experiencing momentary anxiety, that you've lost your basic foundation of peace in the Holy Spirit. And I don't know how to explain this, because it's inexpressible. I think that probably everyone here knows what it is, but it's frustrating as a teacher not to be able to explain what I know by experience.

But there's some things that I suppose someone who's better than I am at it could do. I can't explain it. I just know it by experience, and I trust in the experience of my listeners that they know it too.

That just the joy of being saved carries me through when I'm in situations that are sad. When I'm in sad situations. The loss of loved ones, the loss of friends, the loss of possessions, the loss of health, the kind of things that could make you sad.

They might even make you sad. But you're experiencing sadness at one level, but if you're in the Spirit, you know a settled constancy of rejoicing in the Lord, rejoicing in your salvation, even at those times. And with me, when I'm in a sad situation, I feel no guilt whatsoever about feeling sad.

I think feeling sad is the right thing to feel about a lot of things. But at the same time, I'm aware that I'm not really despairing as others who have no hope. See, Paul said that even when we lose loved ones, we don't grieve as others who have no hope.

We grieve, but not as others who have no hope. All the while, we're grieving at a deeper level where we can still rejoice in our own salvation, and rejoice in our own security in the Lord, and have peace in that situation. So that there is a constancy of this fruit, of the Spirit.

It's not always seen in our surface emotion. But if it's genuine and of the Holy Spirit, it's there regardless of circumstance. There's many things in the Scripture that suggest this.

In John 16, verse 22, Jesus said, Therefore you now have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. Jesus gave his disciples a joy which no one could take from them. We read in the book of Acts how Peter and John got beaten by the Sanhedrin.

And they went away rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Well, how could they rejoice when they'd just been beaten? And they weren't rejoicing that they were released. I mean, they may have been rejoicing about that too.

But they went away rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for Jesus. Now, I'll bet when they were being beaten, it hurt just as bad as if they didn't know the Lord. I imagine physical pain is about the same for Christians and non-Christians.

Well, it may not always be. God may give really unusual dispensations of grace at times, so that a Christian who's being tortured, for all we know, may not feel it quite the same because of the grace that's upon them. I really don't know because I've never been tortured.

But, I mean, there certainly are many testimonies of Christians who have peace and joy in the midst of great torture. And one has to wonder, are they feeling this the way I would feel it? The way I even feel it reading about it? Maybe not. I mean, maybe there's a measure of grace that makes them not feel it the same.

But in any case, it wasn't the fact that they were relieved and set free that caused them to rejoice. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and to experience that beating. The Sanhedrin couldn't take their joy from them.

They could take their liberty from them. That is, they could lock them up. They could take their blood out of them by laying stripes across their backs, but they couldn't take the joy out of them.

This is not dictated to us by circumstance. In 2 Corinthians 7 and verse 4, Paul says, Great is my boldness of speech toward you. Great is my boasting on your behalf.

I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation. In tribulation he is comforted.

In tribulation he is exceedingly joyful. The tribulations are not circumstances that normally are conducive to joy. But he was nonetheless joyful in tribulation because he was joyful in God.

He was joyful with the spirit of joy. In chapter 8 of 2 Corinthians and verse 2, he says that in great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy, these are the saints in Macedonia, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. Now he's talking about how these people were in deep poverty, but they were full of joy.

And they gave generously to an offering that Paul required them to take or asked them to take for the poor saints in Jerusalem. But notice, they were in deep poverty, but that didn't prevent them from having an abundance of joy. Joy and poverty can go together.

You know, most people want their children to have happy childhoods, have happy lives. And toward that end, many people feel they have to give them all the things money can buy. They have to give them, you know, comfortable homes, all the toys, all the clothing,

you know, whatever's in style or whatever's faddish at the time.

Let them be entertained with all the latest things. That's not necessarily true. I mean, just look around.

The world is full of kids who have all those things, at least America is, and they don't seem to be very fulfilled or very happy. And we know from experience that you don't have to have all those things if you're saved. If you're saved, there's a joy that is not dependent on those circumstances.

And in deep poverty even, and I've never been in deep poverty. I've been in poverty, but not deep poverty. But I'm sure that it's no different in deep poverty than it is in the kind of poverty I've been in.

And there's an abundance of joy to be had by the Christian, regardless of that circumstance. We read earlier 1 Thessalonians 1.6. 1 Thessalonians 1.6, that's where Paul was remembering how that the Thessalonians, at their conversion, had received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit. In much affliction with joy.

In all our tribulation we joy exceedingly. You receive the word of much affliction and joy. Joy, affliction, tribulation, these things don't seem to be adversely related to each other in Paul's thinking.

And of course they're not. In Hebrews 10 and verse 34, the writer reminds the readers of their earlier devotion to Christ. They had somewhat backslidden heart by the time he wrote this.

And he was complaining about that, warning them about it. But he reminds them of their early life as Christians. And maybe we go all the way back to verse 32 and read through for 34.

Hebrews 10, 32 through 34. But recall the former days in which after you were illuminated, you endured great struggle with sufferings. A great struggle with sufferings.

Partly while you were made a spectacle, both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated. For you had compassion on me and my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. They had endured the plundering of their goods.

Someone had taken their property from them. Someone had taken their goods from them. And they endured it joyfully, full of joy.

Their Christian joy was not hindered by the loss of their possessions. In James 1 and verse 2, James says, Count it all joy, my brethren, when you fall into diverse trials. James

1, 2. When you fall into diverse trials, count it all joy.

Don't say, well, I can still salvage a little bit of joy in this situation, in this trial. No, it's all joy. Count it all.

Every bit of it is joy. Because, of course, he goes on to say, trials were patience and so forth. In other words, God uses your trials.

Your trials are there because God wants them there. Therefore, they can be something you can be joyful about, even in them. Just a couple of other places.

All those scriptures had to do with joy. There's a couple of scriptures about peace and its invulnerability to circumstantial fluctuations. In Psalm 119 and verse 165, Psalm 119, verse 165, says, Great peace have those who love your law.

Nothing causes them to stumble. Nothing causes them to stumble in their peace. They have a great peace because they love the Lord, they love His law.

Nothing can disturb that peace. Nothing can disturb their walk with God. It's not dependent on circumstances.

Then, of course, we have perhaps one of the more famous verses on this point. John 16, 33, Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room, John 16, verse 33, These things I've spoken to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer.

I've overcome the world. Now, the world is seeking to destroy your peace and your cheer, your good cheer. Your joy and your peace.

But Jesus has overcome the world, and so in Him you have peace, and you can also be of good cheer. Now, He doesn't make any bones about it. He says, In the world you'll have tribulation, but you live a dual existence.

You live in the world, and you also live in Him. In the world you have tribulation. In Him you have peace.

You need to be more aware of your identity and the reality of your life in Christ than of the reality in the world. Now, that might sound too idealistic. How could anyone ever come to a place where they're more aware of their identity and their reality in Christ than they are of their reality in this world? Hey, it can happen.

It can happen. Paul said that our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and abundant weight of glory while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.

Paul knew that reality. I remember hearing one preacher say that shortly after he was converted, he was in a little Pentecostal church, and he gave his testimony there shortly after he was converted, and he came out of the church afterwards with a little old lady who had been saved all her life. He said to him, Sonny, the day is going to come when the things of God are more real to you than this sidewalk that you're standing on right now.

And he says at the time he thought she must be crazy. He couldn't imagine that ever being the case. But as he told the story, he said, I now know what she means.

And so do I. And I hope so do you, because this is how you overcome. You overcome the world as Jesus overcame the world. In him, you have peace, even though in the world you have tribulation.

But if your reality in him is more vivid to you, is more what you're conscious of, more what you keep yourself aware of than your reality and your circumstances in the world, then that's normal, and you can be of good cheer, and you too overcome the world. So joy and peace can exist in spite of tribulation or in the midst of it. Now, finally, our final point has many sub-points, but I want to talk about how to cultivate this fruit.

Since it is fruit, it needs to grow. It needs to be cultivated. And like any other kind of fruit, it can be dwarfed or it can be healthy and so forth, depending on how it is cultivated.

The fruit of the Spirit and its development in your life is not automatic. It's not just regardless of whatever you do, it's just going to happen. It has to be something cultivated by the believer.

Now, there are many things that can cause your peace and joy to be interrupted, at least your emotional sensation of peace and joy. And I've listed a number of them here in different categories. There are physical causes.

There are mental habits. And there are spiritual causes. I've given scriptures for each of these, though I just want to say that these scriptures, some of them don't make the point absolutely.

The fact of the matter is I was proof texting here. I made a list that I thought was right and found scriptures that seemed to confirm it. And I just want to admit that.

I didn't dig these purposes out of the scripture, but I was aware of some of these things causing interruptions in a person's peace or his joy. And I tried to find scriptural verification for it. In a few cases, the scriptural references are not very strong.

The first is a good example. Under physical causes, sleep deprivation, sleep loss. Well, you don't really have much in the scripture that says that sleep loss can make you more

subject to depression or to anxiety.

We know that from experience. There may be some minor scriptural support for that notion. In Psalm 127 verse 2, which says, It is vain for you to rise up early and to sit up late to eat the bread of sorrows, for he gives his beloved sleep.

Now, this probably is speaking more of sleeplessness as a result of sorrow and anxiety, rather than sorrow and anxiety being a result of sleeplessness. But this begins to be a bit of a spiral. It is obvious that if you're grieving or if you are anxious, that it is harder to sleep.

But it's also the case, and it may not be suggested in this passage, but there is also the reverse is true. If you go too long without enough sleep, physically, you get physically depressed. I mean, your nerves get on edge.

Now, that doesn't mean you can't overcome that situation through the Spirit, but it's a greater challenge. And I'm sure that if your lack of sleep is due to circumstances beyond your control, for example, you're being tortured night and day in prison or something for your faith, I would dare say you probably experience some depression. I imagine that you'd experience some anxiety, but that doesn't mean you'd have to succumb to it in any sense.

I believe the greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And regardless of what physical or other circumstances may challenge your joy or your peace, some of them may even hit pretty hard emotionally, you can still know the peace of God and the joy in the Holy Spirit that you can know at other times. Drugs can impede your peace and your joy.

What's ironic is that many times today people are given drugs to enhance their peace. That is anti-anxiety drugs, Prozac and minor tranquilizers and so forth. People are also given antidepressants, that is to enhance their joy.

But studies on these drugs have often shown, and I've read a number of books on this, that these drugs can have the opposite effect. They can actually increase anxiety or increase depression in some cases. And, of course, once a person's physical chemistry becomes dependent on these drugs for these moods, then to go off these drugs can really lead to some deep problems.

Getting on to the drugs in the first place is not a good idea. The scripture I give there has to do with alcohol, which is a drug. It's a consciousness-altering drug.

And, of course, the scripture doesn't talk about Prozac or any of the modern drugs, but people have used alcohol for a long time for mood alteration. And in Proverbs 23, verses 29 through 30, it says, Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger

long at the wine and who go in search of mixed wine. Now, wine is simply one of many drugs that people go after and become addicted to.

Some of them are, in our day, street drugs. Some of them are what are called psychotropic drugs given out by psychiatrists. But in any case, consciousness-altering drugs are often given as the solution to depression and anxiety, but in many cases they don't solve the problem.

Sometimes they only worsen it. And the use of certain kinds of consciousness-altering drugs can definitely interfere with your peace with God and your joy. Sickness, physical sickness, can interfere with it too at times, though it doesn't have to.

I'm not suggesting that these things become excuses for not having peace or joy, because certainly people in all these circumstances have known a consistency of peace and joy, but these things do physically challenge your peace and your joy. In Nehemiah 2, in verse 2, the king asked Nehemiah, Why is your face sad since you are not sick? implying that he knew that people who are sick sometimes get sad, they get under depression, they're physically depressed because their bodies are depressed. But Nehemiah in this case was not sick, and this hardly proves anything by itself.

But the fact is that sickness sometimes is different, certain kinds of sicknesses, and hormonal changes can sometimes affect the emotion of joy or the emotion of peace, but not the spiritual fruit of joy or peace. Also, here's one that might surprise people, material abundance or wealth is one of the physical causes that can cause an interruption of your peace and of your joy. This is ironic because the devil tries to make people think that they'll have more peace, more security, more joy, more happiness, if they simply accumulate enough stuff.

However, there was a guy who managed to test that theory, and that was Solomon. He was one of the few people who had the ability to become the richest man in the world, and he was the richest man in the world at one point in his life. And he, in case you wonder whether the richest man in the world has somehow been freed up from sorrow and depression and anxiety, all you have to do is read the book of Ecclesiastes to find out.

He says it was very unsettling, it was very unfulfilling. But one thing he observed in Ecclesiastes 5 and verse 12 was, he says, the sleep of a laboring man is sweet. Now, a laboring man is one who is not independently wealthy, he has to go out and work for a living.

But his sleep at night is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. Now, that may not be true all the time, but it certainly is true some of the time. The man who has more goods to defend has more to worry about, has more anxieties.

And Solomon knew, I guess from experience, that the riches, the abundance of a rich man can keep him from sleeping, can actually deprive him of peace. We find it can deprive a man of joy also, according to the scriptures. In Matthew chapter 19 and verse 22 we find that the rich young ruler, it says, when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

He went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. Why does that make him sorrowful? Well, Jesus said, you have to forsake all that you have. You have to sell it all and give to the poor and then come follow me.

Well, he couldn't do it. He was in bondage to his possessions, therefore he couldn't be happy. He went away grieved.

He went away sorrowful, not because he was too poor, but because he was too rich. So there are physical things that can interfere with your joy and your peace. But all of these things can be overcome through walking in the Spirit.

There are mental habits that interfere with your joy and your peace. One of which would be worry. Obviously, if you're in the habit of worrying, you've got to quit because it's a sin and the Bible forbids it.

But many Christians do it. And if they do, they don't have the peace of God. It deprives them.

Worrying is a mental habit that will keep you from having the peace of God. And so, Paul says in Philippians chapter 4 and verse 6, Be anxious for nothing. That is, don't worry about anything.

King James says, be careful for nothing. But it means worried or anxious. Philippians 4, 6, Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Now, there's a guarantee. You will have the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guarding your heart and your mind, if you do what Paul says here. Don't be anxious.

Don't worry. But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. And if you do that, the peace of God will be there.

But what if you don't do that? If you worry, that interferes with the peace of God. And there's a second thing suggested there. Unthankfulness also interferes with the peace of God.

You have to, in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. You will be

joyful and peaceful if you maintain a habit of thankfulness. If you maintain a habit of unthankfulness, you will never quite be happy enough.

And you won't be at peace. You won't be fulfilled. Life will simply not ever be quite right for you if you don't learn to be thankful for what God has given you already.

Inappropriate desire. If you set your desires on things that are not right for you to have, this certainly can interfere with your joy and with your peace. Of course, you need to learn to set your desires on those things which are right to have.

I have a scripture here, 2 Samuel 13, 2. It's about Amnon and his desire for his half-sister. It says, Amnon was so distressed over his sister Tamar that he became sick. For she was a virgin and it was improper for Amnon to do anything to her.

He wanted her, but he knew it would be improper. He couldn't have her legitimately. And so he was sick and distressed over it.

Well, that's obviously an attitude that may exist in lesser degree, even in a saved person. A desire for something that God is withholding from them, a desire for something that they shouldn't have, that can interrupt your joy and peace. You need to weed out those ungodly desires.

Also, thinking about sad things, melancholy contemplation, can certainly interfere with your joy, at least the emotion of joy. I'm not saying that the joy in the Lord necessarily goes away when you think about sad things, but you will not always experience the same emotional high of joy if you're contemplating sad things. The psalmist in Psalm 42, we don't know where he was, but he was separated from where he wanted to be.

He wanted to be in Jerusalem. He wanted to be able to go and worship God at the temple, but he was something in his circumstances had separated him from that against his will. And he says in verse 3 and 4, My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually say to me, Where is your God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me.

For I used to go with a multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast. He remembered the pilgrimages he used to make to Jerusalem. Now he can't make them.

It makes him depressed. It makes him cry. It caused him to pour out his soul to God.

Well, that's good. Sadness can make you pour out your prayer to God. That's good.

It's not always bad to have an interruption in your emotional highs. But thinking about sad things like remembering better days, remembering when things were better, especially like the prodigal son, you know, I remember when I was in my father's house,

things were a lot better. Those can be good things, good sad things to remember.

It can make you sad to remember things you've left behind and things you've lost. And it may not be all that wise to contemplate them all the time. Nothing wrong with thinking about it occasionally as long as it doesn't create the wrong kind of reaction spiritually.

Another thing, another mental habit that can definitely interfere with your joy and your peace is bitterness. I have an example in Naomi, in Ruth chapter 1. Naomi's name, of course, meant pleasantness. But when she lost her husband and her two sons, they all died, she said to people, don't call me Naomi, call me Mara, which means bitterness, bitter.

For the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. Well, she was not a happy camper. She did not receive from the hand of the Lord joyfully the providence and the dispensations that had been given to her, which were not enjoyable.

She had lost all the males of her family, and she decided to choose to be bitter about it. I don't want to be pleasant. Don't call me pleasant.

Call me bitter. I want to be bitter from now on. And she was.

She got happy later on, but only after she gave up her bitterness. Now, there are spiritual causes that will interrupt your joy and your peace in the Lord. Also, the most notable is sin.

David, having sinned, wrote in Psalm 51 and verse 12, restore unto me the joy of my salvation. Obviously, he'd lost it. He'd lost the joy of salvation because of his sin with Bathsheba.

And so he asked for it to be brought back. He wouldn't be asking that if he hadn't already noticed its absence. There are things, sin in a person's life can definitely cancel out their experience of God's peace and God's joy.

In Jeremiah chapter 16 and verse 5, it says, For thus says the Lord, do not enter the house of mourning, nor go to lament or bemoan these people, for I have taken away my peace from these people, says the Lord. Loving kindness and mercies. I've taken away my peace and my loving kindness and my mercies from them.

Why? They're in rebellion against him. Their sinfulness had caused them to lose their peace because God actually took it away from them. In Isaiah 48, God can take his peace away from people when they are in sin in order to discipline them and to motivate them to repent.

Chapter 48 of Isaiah and verse 22 simply says, There's no peace, says the Lord, for the wicked. If you're wicked, if you've got sin in your life, you won't have the peace of God.

It's just that simple.

Another spiritual cause of loss of joy or peace can be demonic. Now I don't know and I can't set the perimeters for you, biblically, on how often this is the case. We read frequently in the New Testament of people having demons.

Many times they are said to be tormented by demons. Torment is the opposite. Spiritual torment is the opposite of peace and joy.

And I suspect that many people who go running off to psychiatrists and psychologists, probably, if the truth were known, their problems may be caused by demons. There certainly are people in mental institutions today whose symptoms, if they were manifested in the time of Christ, would have been judged to be demon possession. And even if it's not demon possession, I believe that demons are there to torment.

And they are there to intrude and to try to interfere with your experience of the joy and peace and other aspects of your walk in the Spirit. And I believe that people can be tormented by demons. Paul says to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1.7, God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of power and of a sound mind.

The spirit of fear is not the spirit that God wants us to have, that God has given us. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of joy and peace, but there may be other spirits that don't belong to us, that we shouldn't have, but may yet seek to intrude and interfere with our walk with the Lord. One other spiritual cause, and this one is not a negative, but a positive.

The feeling of joy and peace can be withheld deliberately by God to motivate and accomplish long-range benefits in the believer's life. In 2 Corinthians 7.10, Paul says there is a sorrow, a godly sorrow, that leads to repentance, which is not to be regretted, not to be repented of. Sorrow is, when you have deep sorrow over your sin, you're not experiencing joy, but it is not to be regretted that you have this sorrow, because it leads to repentance, and that's a positive development, and something that God wants to happen, and so sorrow can work for your good.

In Psalm 30, in verse 5, it says that God's anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life. Not weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. If God brings you to weeping over your sin, then you will have joy in the morning, you'll have joy afterwards, and that's a positive benefit that He intends for you to have after a season of unjoyfulness.

In Psalm 126, verses 5 and 6, it says, Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. This is frequently applied to evangelism, and that may be in fact what it's intended to be applied to.

It's not all that clear what it is applied to, and therefore applying it to evangelism, which

what preachers usually do is possibly the best thing to do with it, but it's clear that weeping is often a temporary measure that is a prelude to joy. Many times I think God may allow us to experience emotional sorrow so that we can enjoy the joy more. If you always had even circumstances, joy would be something you'd never notice.

It's when you are deprived for a while that you notice things. I mean, those of us who went down to Honduras for several months, and had to eat the same kind of diet every day as a plain diet and so forth, and the weather in some cases was adverse, the first time you had a meal when you came back to the States, I'll bet you enjoyed that meal like few meals you've ever eaten. And yet it's really just one of thousands of meals you've eaten and just like it before, but because of deprivation, you enjoy it more when the deprivation ends.

And so also God, in giving us the experience of joy, sometimes will give us times of sadness so that we might know the joy of coming out of that sadness. In Hebrews 12, 11, we are told that no chastening seems at the present time joyous, but afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it. God puts us through chastening.

It's not a joyous experience, but it's good for us. It yields the fruit of righteousness in us. It's part of our training.

So there will be times when we don't feel joy in our circumstances. Chastening never seems joyous in the present. But we can rejoice in it nonetheless, knowing that it's going to bring about something that we really do desire.

Hebrews 12, 2 says that Jesus, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame. He didn't enjoy the cross. He despised it.

He endured it. But he did it for the joy that was set before him in the long range. So to endure temporary sadness is something that God does not think is wrong.

For us to have interruptions in our emotion of joy and peace is sometimes part of God's training in chastening and his way of bringing about some spiritual benefit in us. But that doesn't mean that the inner foundation of joy and peace are absent even at those times. Now, I've run out of time, and I can't finish this up.

There's not much more, but the points at the very bottom, overcoming barriers to joy and peace, I especially want to call your attention to, especially where we're told to trust God. Jesus said in John 14, 1, Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me.

Believing in Jesus will be the opposite of letting your heart be troubled. It's associated with faith. The psalmist said, why are you cast down on my soul in Psalm 42, 11? Why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God.

And when we are not experiencing